

JCA helps over-40 job seekers

By Nicole Georges

TORONTO

When Jamaican-born immigrant Acton McKenley was laid off from his job at the age of 47, things were "tight" for a while, he admits. But he remained optimistic and turned to the Jamaica Canadian Association for help.

McKenley is now a participant in the Job Opportunity Plus programme, which is helping him to navigate the current labour market.

Programme Coordinator Audrey Taylor says the Job Opportunity Plus programme was created in response to research which showed that a large number of people were being laid off in their 40s and 50s. Ms Taylor explains that people who get downsized or laid off in their later years often feel lost.

"They need to learn how to job search on the Internet, how to upgrade their resumes, what the labour market trends are."

The programme has already

enjoyed a measure of success in re-integrating clients into the labour market.

Forty-nine year-old David Cerritos confesses that he was "a little scared" when he was lost his job as a forklift operator. "I thought it would be hard. It was my first job after coming to Canada from El Salvador. I didn't know where to start my search," he said.

When he sought out Job Opportunity Plus, he was showed how to update his resume and use the Internet. The coordinators sent off his

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resume to prospective employers and eight months later he found work.

Ms Taylor says the programme's

workshops teach about market trends and globalisation, so clients understand they are not at fault for being "downsized".

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According to Taylor, the most important asset the mature job seeker should have is optimism.

"Don't focus on age; only on the skills you have to offer. Don't job search on your own. Get help.

Don't believe the myth that older persons can't work as well as young people," she advised.

Thirty-six year-old Jamaican, Lurline Ximines, says she is so satisfied with the help she got through the programme that she refers her family and friends to them.

The programme has offered help to over 1000 job seekers since its inception in 1999. Interested persons can have one-on-one sessions to evaluate their career objectives and identify their training needs.